

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

**CLOSURE OF WASTE IMPOUNDMENTS**

(No.)

**CODE 360**

**DEFINITION**

The closure of waste impoundments (treatment lagoons and waste storage ponds), that are no longer used for their intended purpose, in an environmentally safe manner.

**PURPOSES**

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following purposes.

- To protect the quality of surface water and groundwater resources;
- To eliminate a safety hazard for humans and livestock;
- To safeguard the public health.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies to agricultural waste impoundments that are no longer needed as a part of a waste management system and are to be permanently closed or converted.

Where these impoundments are to be converted to fresh water storage and the original impoundment was not constructed to NRCS standards, this practice will only apply where the investigation, as called for in National Engineering Manual (NEM) 501.23, shows structural integrity.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

The closure shall comply with all Federal, State, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

All structures used to convey waste to waste impoundments shall be removed and replaced with compacted earth material or otherwise rendered unable to convey waste.

Liquid and slurry wastes shall be agitated and pumped to the extent conventional pumping will allow. Clean water shall be added as necessary to facilitate the agitation and pumping. The wastewater shall be utilized in accordance with NRCS conservation practice standard, Waste Utilization, Code 633. The sludge remaining on the bottom and sides of the waste treatment lagoons or waste storage ponds may remain in place if it will not pose a threat to the environment. If leaving the sludge in place would pose a threat, it shall be removed to the fullest extent practical and utilized in accordance with NRCS conservation practice standard, Waste Utilization, Code 633.

**Land Reclamation.** - Impoundments with embankments may be breached so that they will no longer impound water and excavated impoundments may be backfilled so that these areas may be reclaimed for other uses. Waste impoundments that have water impounded against the embankment are considered embankment structures if the depth of water is three feet or more above natural ground.

- (1) Embankment Impoundments. - Waste shall be removed from the site before the embankment is breached. The slopes and bottom of the breach shall be stable for the soil material involved, however the side slopes shall be no steeper than three horizontal to one vertical (3:1).
- (2) Excavated Impoundments. - The backfill height shall exceed the design finished grade by 5 percent to allow for settlement. The finished surface shall be constructed of the most clayey material available and mounded to shed rainfall runoff. Incorporate available topsoil where feasible to aid establishment of vegetation.

**Conversion to Fresh Water Storage.** - The converted impoundment shall meet the requirements as set forth in the NRCS practice standard for the intended purpose.

**Safety** - When sludge is not removed from a waste impoundment that is converted to fresh water storage, it shall not be used for fish production. Precautions (fencing and warning signs) shall be used to ensure that the pond is not used for incompatible purposes such as swimming and livestock watering until water quality is adequate for these purposes.

**Protection** - All disturbed areas not returned to crop production shall be vegetated in accordance with seeding specifications in the Field Office Technical Guide, or other suitable measures used to control erosion and restore the esthetic value of the site.

Measures shall be taken during construction to minimize site erosion and pollution of downstream water resources. This may include such items as silt fences, hay bale barriers, temporary vegetation, and mulching.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Reduce pumping effort to empty waste impoundments where the surface is covered by a dense mat of floating vegetation by first applying herbicide to the vegetation and then burning the residue. Appropriate permits must be obtained before burning.

Alternative methods of sludge removal may be required where the impoundments contain large amounts of oyster shells, soil, or other debris.

Minimize the impact of odors associated with emptying and land applying wastewater and sludge from a waste impoundment by using an incorporation application method at a time when the humidity is low, when winds are calm, and when wind direction is away from populated areas.

Keep sludge left in place flooded to prevent its aerobic decomposition with the potential release of nutrients to surface and ground water.

### Cultural Resources Considerations

NRCS's objective is to avoid any effect to cultural resources and protect them in their original location. Determine if installation of this practice will have any effect on any cultural resources.

Document any specific considerations for cultural resources in the design docket and the Practice Requirements worksheet.

GM 420, Part 401, the California Environmental Handbook and the California Environmental Assessment Worksheet provide guidance on how the NRCS must account for cultural resources. The Field Office Technical Guide, Section II contains general information, with Web sites for additional information.

### Endangered Species Considerations

Determine if installation of this practice, along with any others proposed, will have an effect on any federal or state listed Rare, Threatened or Endangered species or their habitat. NRCS's objective is to benefit these species and others of concern, or at least not have any adverse effect on a listed species. If the Environmental Evaluation indicates that the action may adversely affect a listed species or result in adverse modification of habitat of listed species which has been determined to be critical habitat, NRCS will advise the land user of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and recommend alternative conservation treatments that avoid the adverse effects. Further assistance will be provided only if the landowner selects one of the alternative conservation treatments for installation; or at the request of the landowners, NRCS may initiate consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and/or California Department of Fish and Game. If the Environmental Evaluation indicates the action will not affect a listed species or result in adverse modification of critical habitat, consultation generally will not apply and usually would not be initiated. Document any special considerations for endangered species in the Practice Requirements Worksheet.

### Water Quantity

1. Effects on the water budget, especially on volumes and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, transpiration, deep percolation, groundwater recharge.

### Water Quality

1. Effects on erosion and the movement of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached substances carried by runoff.
2. Effects on the use and management of nutrients and their effect on surface and ground water quality.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications for closure of abandoned waste treatment lagoons and waste storage ponds shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose. The plans and specifications shall also be consistent with the requirements of that standard.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The proper closure of a waste treatment lagoon or waste storage pond should require little or no operation and maintenance; however, if it is converted to another use, such as a fresh water pond, operation and maintenance shall be in accordance with the needs as set forth in NRCS conservation practice standard for the intended purpose.